

Indianford Dam's future still in cloudy waters

(Published Thursday, July 06, 2000 11:43:22 AM CDT)

By Catherine W. Idzerda/Gazette Staff

A logjam of contract issues is holding up progress on the Indianford Dam.

For the past several months, representatives from Rock and Jefferson counties and the Rock Koshkonong Lake District have been mapping out the dam's future.

Top on the priority list?

A long-term lease with Tom Reiss, a Watertown businessman who wants to generate electricity at the dam, and formation of an Indianford Management Commission, a group made up of three counties and the lake district.

Negotiations on both issues have hit some choppy water.

Dane County Executive Kathleen Falk recently reiterated her county's position on the dam. With the exception of a one-time sum of \$3,000, the county is not interested in participating financially.

"She's turned down specific ideas, but her door's still open for additional discussion," said Toft Wells, Falk's chief of staff.

The original proposal called for joint ownership of the dam. Jefferson, Rock and Dane counties and the Rock Koshkonong Lake District would split the cost of running the dam four ways.

The lake district would pay 25 percent of the total costs. Of the remaining amount, Rock County would pay 50 percent; Jefferson County, 40 percent; and Dane County, 10 percent.

Costs--including a maintenance fund--are estimated at \$90,000 a year.

At that rate, Dane County would pay \$6,750; Rock County, \$33,750; Jefferson County, \$27,000; and the lake district, \$22,500.

"I guess it's back to the drawing board," Tom Schroeder, Rock County corporation counsel, said Wednesday.

Meanwhile, Schroeder has been working on a long-term lease between Reiss and what will become the Indianford Management Commission.

Reiss said he's frustrated by clauses in the lease that would make the project "economically unfeasible."

"I told them that I might be able to make between \$80,000 to \$100,000 generating electricity at the dam," Reiss said. "Now, there's a clause saying they want 50 percent of any profits over \$100,000."

A long-term lease, Reiss said, could run from 50 to 99 years.

"With inflation, what's \$100,000 going to be worth years from now?" Reiss asked. "That was not part of the original agreement."

And the site itself has turned out to be more expensive than originally planned, Reiss said.

"Part of the turbine--called a runner--was destroyed and had to be replaced," he said. "That alone will cost about \$100,000 to replace."

Schroeder acknowledged that the 50 percent clause was not part of the original lease discussion but was later suggested by a lake district representative.

"Under the draft agreement for the management commission, any contract that Rock County signs, the other sides have to approve," Schroeder said. "Even though we don't have the management commission formed yet, I thought we should have agreement on the lease up-front, rather than having it become an issue later."

As more parties became involved, the negotiating process became more difficult, Schroeder said.

Talks will continue on both issues, he added.

In the fall, the Jefferson County Board will discuss funding for the Indianford Dam as part of its budget process.

[Close Window](#)